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ABSTRACT

During the last decade, educators have begun attaching new importance to involving parents in education. This paper presents findings of a study that addressed parental involvement in site-based decision making (SBDM) in schools in which minority students were becoming the predominant student group. The study focused on 2 rural elementary schools in the south central United States; over 90 percent of the student population at each site was Hispanic. Methodology included interviews with teachers, administrators, and parents; field observation; and document analysis. The paper provides an overview of parent involvement as perceived by parents, teachers, and administrators; highlights parent involvement in curriculum and instructional decision making; and describes the factors that may promote or inhibit the role of parents as decision makers. Findings include the following: (1) Principals and teachers who do not recognize the need to redefine the traditional roles of stakeholders will not succeed in the implementation of SBM; (2) a change in school culture that moves away from a "protective model" and seeks to overcome "the cultural constraints problem" is necessary; (3) principals must work to establish a school climate that makes all parents feel welcome and that they have something positive to contribute; (4) schools must be places where principals work to provide a wide variety of parental involvement roles; and (5) schools must clearly state the parental role and expectation for parental involvement in site-based decision making. Appendices contain survey findings. (Contains 53 references.) (LMI)

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Parental Involvement in a Majority/Minority School Context: Lessons from the Field

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Parental involvement has been recognized as a critical element in effective school restructuring (Lynn, 1994). Consequently, involvement of parents in school governance through site-based decision making (SBDM) has become a promising avenue to respond to the current challenge of achieving success for all students. However, some argue that parental involvement must be redefined. For instance, Swap (1993) stated, "We will never see lasting school reform until we first see parent reform" (p.15).

The belief that parent reform is an integral part of school reform is supported by Comer whose School Development Program is a successful example of the integration of school improvement and parental involvement (Comer, 1980 and 1988; Anson, et al. 1991; Squires and Kranyik, 1995). Comer believes that, for schools to be effective--that is, for them to make and sustain academic gains for all students, parents must play a major role in all aspects of school life, particularly in management and governance. Merely inviting parents is not enough; parents need clear mechanisms for involvement. Thus as schools strive to meet the traditional mandate of teaching and learning, the increasing diverse social and academic needs of students in a majority /minority settings call for creative ways to enhance parental involvement.

While previous research supports the benefits associated with parental involvement (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein and Dauber 1989, Smey-Richman,1991, and Chavkin, 1993), there is a need for additional information as to what types of schools encourage parental involvement or for that matter, what types of activities schools use to involve parents and the

effect they have on performance (Coleman and Schneider, 1993). Similarly, a need exists to identify how to involve low income and minority parents because families may find the traditional forms of parent involvement as practiced by schools, inaccessible and inappropriate since they are based on middle class norms and family structures that no longer exist (Davies, 1991; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987; and Lareau and Benson, 1984).

Additionally, many schools are faced with the situation in which minority students are now becoming the majority of the student body. Thus, they are operating within a majority/minority context. The Census Bureau has projected that by the year 2000, 33 percent of the school-age population will consist of minorities (Children's Defense Fund, 1989, page 116). The minority children will become the majority adult population in at least four of our nation's states--namely Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1987). Currently, Texas minorities are now the majority (Garcia, 1991). Therefore, a clear and meaningful understanding of the majority/minority context is required if parental involvement is to be meaningful. The majority/minority context has specific implications for meaningful involvement of parents in school governance.

> Those schools adopting a decentralized approach to school management for the purpose of making decisions closest to the client are faced with the additional challenge of a changing population which does not reflect the old mold (Antelo and Ovando, 1993, p. 137).

Although the involvement of parents in school governance has been identified as an encouraging means through which the challenge of achieving success for all students can be met, the initial results of parental involvement in site-based management are disappointing. Research indicates that parents on site-based decision making committees are not making decisions of consequence (Malen, Ogawa and Krantz, 1990). Far too often, parents serve on site-based decision making committees in a token capacity rather than as joint decisionmakers. Rarely are

parents involved in decisions related to budget, personnel, and--least of all--curricula and/or instruction. This limited decision-making authority may reflect educators' belief that parents are unqualified to make school decisions, especially in the area of curricula.

The fact that site-based management has failed to empower parents or address critical issues areas such as budget, curriculum, and/or personnel is not surprising. Studies indicate that the majority of educators (principals and teachers) do not consider parents as having the appropriate training to serve in a decision-making capacity and prefer that parental involvement be limited to traditional roles such as fund-raiser or classroom helper. Thus, few parents are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of roles, which go beyond supportive roles to include that of advocate and decisionmaker (Rich 1987; Chavkin and Williams 1985; Snider 1990; Williams and Stallworth, 1984).

Reyes and Wagstaff (1992) support the need for clarification of the role of parents in site-based management. A major conclusion, drawn from their in-depth study of six school districts practicing site-based management, was the fact that some parents, while eager to be involved in the site-based management process, were uncertain as to their scope of authority and responsibility. Reyes and Wagstaff (1992) further identified the need for more studies on the role of the parents to determine the amount of influence that parents have on site councils in their school.

Additionally, existing research provides little guidance on such major issues as how site-based decision making committees should be composed to maximize parental contributions. Epstein states,

> We've reached a point where token representation is not going to be defensible. What we don't know is whether it should be as it is in Chicago where parents and community members have a majority, or if there is some productive balance between the two. That's one of the research questions for the 90s (Epstein in Snider, 1991).

Reported here are the results of a study addressing site-based management parental involvement in a majority/minority context. It will provide an overview of parental involvement as perceived by parents, teachers, and administrators. It will highlight parental involvement associated with curriculum and instruction decisionmaking. Additionally, it will describe those factors that may promote, facilitate, enhance or inhibit the role of parents as decisionmakers.

Theoretical Background

During the last decade, educators have begun attaching new importance to involving parents in education. School reform now has identified parental involvement (well beyond the traditional roles of Parent Teacher Organization meetings and parent-teacher conferences) as a critical ingredient and component in effective school restructuring (Lynn,1994). School improvement projects such as Comer's School Development Program and Levin's Accelerated Schools Project include non-traditional (newly defined) parental involvement as an essential component for improving academic achievement for low-income and minority students.

Researchers have identified many models that outline parental involvement roles pertaining to their children's education (Fantini, 1980; Jenkins,1981; O'Leary,1982; Henderson, Marburger and Ooms, 1986; Williams and Stallworth 1983 and 1984; and Collins et al.,1982; Epstein 1987 and 1992). The most active role for parental involvement in each model is that of decisionmaker in matters related to school governance.

Parental involvement has been found to affect student achievement in a positive manner. Henderson (1981, and 1987) reviewed more than 87 studies and concluded "the evidence is now beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better; and they go to better schools" (1987, p. 1). Chavkin concluded, "There is little doubt that parent involvement in education is directly related to significant increases in student achievement" (1993, page 2). Other researchers have reached similar conclusions

(Brofenbrenner, 1974; Clark 1983; Dornbusch and Ritter, 1988; and Rich, 1985; Walberg 1984; Sattes, 1985; Collins et al, 1982).

Epstein's research (Becker and Epstein, 1982; and Epstein and Dauber, 1988) indicates that school programs and practices of teachers to involve parents have positive effects on a range of issues. These issues include: teachers' opinions regarding abilities of parents to help their children on schoolwork at home; attitudes of students related to school, homework, and the similarity of school and home; students' reading achievement; parents' abilities to help their children across the grades; and how parents rated the teacher's skills and quality of teaching.

While research does not specify any one type of parental involvement as best (Sattes, 1985, page 2) mere continuation of traditional forms may prove inadequate in today's modern times. Kerbow and Bernhardt's research (Schneider, 1993) found traditional parental involvement in predominantly minority schools did not significantly impact standardized achievement test scores as it did in predominantly White schools of the same social class background. This finding held true--even when the students in the predominantly minority schools spent more hours per week on homework and had parents who used the school to assist their children on a number of levels. Henderson (1987) refers to the above phenomena as a "ceiling point". For example, in poor districts, parental involvement may succeed in raising achievement scores, but not to the national average. Thus, this "ceiling point." Comer's School Development Program integrates school improvement and parental involvement. As a result, it overcomes the "ceiling point" and maintains student gains across grades (Comer, 1980 and 1988; Anson et al. 1991; Squires and Kranyik, 1995).

An exploratory study of the attitudes and practices of minority parents concerning parental involvement in their child's education revealed that the attitudes of minority parents are very similar to that of White parents (Williams and Chavkin in Chavkin ed., 1993). The data (taken from a subsample of 1,188 Hispanic and African-American parents as part of a larger six-

year study by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) clearly indicates that African-American and Hispanic parents agree very strongly on the importance of being involved in their children's education and see such responsibility as part of their realm of responsibility. Other researchers have had similar findings (Robledo,1989, Ritter et al., 1993).

William's and Chavkin's data also indicated that minority parents were interested in taking an active part in their child's education in a variety of roles. When surveyed about actual participation in parental involvement activities, minority parents responded that they took part in traditional activities such as helping with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, and taking part in Parent Teacher Organization meetings. Parents reported that few schools offered them the opportunity to be involved in non-traditional activities such as advocacy, school decisions, evaluations, or budgets.

Dauber and Epstein (Report No. 33, 1989) gathered data from both teachers and parents in eight inner-city, Chapter 1 (Baltimore) schools--specifically five elementary and three middle schools. Parents reported their attitudes about their children's school, their practices at home, their perceptions of how the schools presently involve them, and suggested changes schools could make in their programs and practices. The teachers reported that most parents in this study were not involved--nor did they want to be. However, parents indicated that they were keenly involved in their children's education and needed more and better information from teachers on how to help their children at home. The data indicated that the strongest and most consistent predictors of parental involvement at school and at home were the specific school programs and teachers practices that encourage and guide parental involvement.

> Regardless of parent education, family size, student ability, or school level (elementary or middle school), parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school, at home on homework and at home on reading activities....When parents

perceive that the school is doing many things to involve them, they are more involved in their children's education at school and at home. The school's practices, not just family characteristics, make a difference in whether parents became involved in and feel informed about their children's education (p.9).

Research evidence indicates that educators generally favor parental involvement, but with limitations. Williams and Stallworth's (1983-84) survey of 3,500 educators in the Southwest found that, although educators favored greater parental involvement, educators were not enthusiastic about the participation of parents in curricula development, instruction, or school governance. The general consensus was that parents should not be involved in activities that either promote or require power sharing. However, other forms of parental involvement, such as assisting with homework or tutoring, were acceptable--provided teachers give parents ideas about how to help their children. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions (Harris, 1987; Tangri and Leitch 1982).

Some school cultures exist as a strong barrier to effectively involving parents, especially minority and low-income ones. The dominant model (set of norms) for home school partnerships from which most schools operate is that of the "Protective Model" (Swap 1993, page 28). Its aim is to protect schools from interference from parents. Parents delegate to the school the responsibility for educating their children. Parents hold the school accountable for results, and educators accept this delegation of responsibility. Parental involvement in decision making or collaborative problem solving is seen as inappropriate and an interference in the teacher's job. Lightfoot (1981) sees schools practicing an avoidance relationship with parents and parents and teachers are described as having an adversarial relationship. Therefore, schools avoid conflict with parents by engaging in ritualistic encounters that offer no real opportunity for parent-teacher dialogue. Parent Teacher Organization meetings, school open houses, and brief parent-teacher conferences are such examples. Lightfoot states, "These rituals are contrived occasions that

symbolically affirm the idealized parent-school relationship but rarely provide the chance for authentic interaction" (pages 27-28).

Minority parents may feel uncomfortable at school; and as a result, they do not participate in traditional activities such as Parent Teacher Organizations (Comer, 1980). Comer's work with the New Haven Schools reveals that minority parents often lack knowledge about school protocol, have had negative experiences with schools, and feel unwelcome in a middle-class institution. Because of racial, income, and educational differences, parents are reluctant to become involved. Programs must be restructured to attract parents who have been reluctant to become involved in school. Comer (1988, page 2) concludes, "Schools must win the support of parents and learn to respond creatively and flexibly to student needs."

Building an inclusive community that engages parents and other community members as partners is stressed by Levin's Accelerated Schools Model. The Accelerated Schools Model, like Comer's School Development Model contains a governance component (Chenoweth and Kushman in Chion-Kenney, 1994). Site-based decision making may be one such mechanism. Most of the literature defining site-based decision making identifies parents as a part of the process (Wagstaff and Reyes, 1992).

Research reviewed more than 200 documents related to site-based decision making (Malen, Ogawa, and Krantz, 1990) . They concluded that site councils, including parents, teachers and administrators, do not exert a significant influence on matters related to budget, personnel, and programming. Site council members describe their involvement to be a supportive function such as listening, advising, endorsing the decisions that others have already made, and taking token actions. Furthermore, site-based decision making committees rarely make key decisions related to issues of curriculum and instruction (Wohlsetter and Odden, 1992).

"Before school-based decision making can change teaching and learning for the better, we must make some changes in the reform itself" (Guskey and Petersen, 1996, p. 10). Guskey

and Petersen identify a variety of problems that are keeping site-based decision making from improving teaching and learning. These problems are in the areas of : power, implementation, ambiguous mission, time, expertise, cultural constraints of the organization, avoidance, and motivation.

Moreover, the research provides little guidance as to how site-based decision making councils should be structured to maximize parental contributions. Epstein states,

> We've reached a point where token representation is not going to be defensible. What we don't know is whether it should be as it is in Chicago where parents and community members have a majority, or if there is some productive balance between the two. That's one of the research questions for the 90s (Epstein in Snider, 1991).

METHOD

A qualitative study was conducted at two rural elementary schools in the South Central United States with over 90% of the student population at each site being Hispanic. Three types of data were used: open interviewing techniques with teachers, administrators and parents; field observation; and document reviews. The multiple case-study used both within-case analysis and the cross-site analysis. Eight research questions guided this qualitative study:

(1) What do parents perceive their involvement role to be within the context of site-based decision making?

(2) What do teachers perceive the role of parental involvement to be within the context of site-based decision making?

(3) What do principals perceive the role of parental involvement to be within the context of site-based decision making?

(4) To what extent are there differences in parental involvement roles for minorities?

(5) To what extent do parents, principals and teachers identify the parental involvement role to be that of a decisionmaker within the context of site-based decision making?

(6) In the identified role as decisionmaker, to what extent are the decisions related to matters of school curricula and/or instruction?

(7) What overall factors do parents, principals and teachers identify as enhancing or inhibiting the role of parent as decisionmaker within the context of site-based decision making?

(8) What factors do parents, principals and teachers specifically identify as enhancing or inhibiting the role of parent as decisionmaker as related to matters of school curricula and/or instruction within the context of site-based management?

Participants

Multiple sites were selected for this study using purposeful sampling. Two elementary schools in South Central United States participated in this study. These schools were selected according to the following criteria: (1) Both schools were located within the same district. (2) Each site must have practiced site-based decision making for at least three years. (3) Each campus was to have had its principal for at least three years. (4) At least 50 percent of the student population was economically disadvantaged. (5) At least 50 percent of the student population was an ethnic minority group.

The schools selected served a student population of over 90 percent Hispanic students and over 90 percent economically disadvantaged (at-risk, according to Title 1 standards). One of the elementary sites (School B) selected was high performing based on its 1995 "Exemplary" accountability rating from the State Education Agency. An "Exemplary" accountability rating indicates that at least 90 percent of the total students and students in each student group had passed each section of the state's academic skills test. Likewise, the campus must have had a dropout rate of 1 percent or less of all students and each student group and an attendance rate of at least 94 percent. The second campus (School A) was considered average having an

accountability rating of "Acceptable", meaning at least 25 percent of all students and students in each student group had passed each subject area of the state's academic skills test. Correspondingly, the campus must have had a dropout rate of six percent or less and an attendance rate of at least 94 percent.

Instrumentation

Following the overriding principal of triangulation (Yin, 1989; Lincoln and Guba 1985; and Patton, 1990) multiple sources of evidence were used including: open in-depth interviews with teachers, parents and principals, document review, and field observations.

The primary documents reviewed in this study were Campus Improvement Plans, minutes of site-based decision making meetings, memos to parents and teachers, inter-office memos, district publications related to migrant education, informational flyers related to the campuses, and teacher handbooks.

Field observations served as the third source of supplementary data in the triangulation of sources. The purpose of these observations was to describe the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities, and the meaning of what was observed from the perspective of those who observed.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) classify field observations in multiple ways: participant or nonparticipant role, covert or overt observation, and natural or contrived settings. For the purpose of this study, observations were conducted in an overt fashion, and in a natural setting. Additionally, the observation was of a limited duration; and the focus of the observation was limited to the research questions (Patton, 1990).

Procedures

Interviews were conducted with principals and assistant principals at each site. Teachers were selected for interviews based on their current position of grade level lead teacher or member of the site-based decision making committee. The parents selected to participate were

either members of the site-based decision making committee or chosen at random. A total of 41 interviews were completed at the two sites using a piloted interview protocol as a guide (an average of 20 interviews were conducted at each site).

In processing the data for this study, both unitizing and categorizing processes were employed. Categories and patterns emerged that shaped the case study reports and the final discussion and analyses based on the raw data of the case study records. (Patton, 1990; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; and Miles and Huberman, 1984)

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the four aspects of trustworthiness, were observed in conducting the study and the analyses of the results. Multiple research sites, pilot studies, triangulation of data, establishment of an audit trail, attention to the tenets of ethics, member checks, and peer debriefing were used to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data.

Findings

School A and School B are located in South Central United States. They are part of a district located along the US Mexico border which covers approximately 226 square miles. School A and the district are adjacent to one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in its state. During the last five years, the student population of the district has grown by 40 percent with the current population slightly more than 12,000 students. The district as a whole is 99 percent Hispanic and one percent White. More than 80 percent of the students districtwide are economically disadvantaged. And 66 percent of the student population are enrolled in English as a Second Language and bilingual programs.

School A's student population was 92 percent Hispanic of which 100 percent were at-risk, according to Chapter 1 standards. Fifty percent of the students began school in English as a Second Language classes. Recent immigrants from Mexico made up 1.6 percent of the student population, and 27 percent of the student population is migrant. School A opened in 1985 and

served approximately 980 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Approximately 97 percent of its students were bused to the campus from surrounding areas.

Demographically, School B's student population was 97 percent Hispanic of which 92 percent were at-risk, according to Chapter 1 standards. Eighty percent of the students began school in English as a Second Language/bilingual classes. Recent immigrants from Mexico made up 12 percent of the student population and 40 percent of the student population was migrant. School B opened in 1990 and served approximately 850 students in prekindergarten through fifth grade. Being in a rural area, 98 percent of the student population was bused to school.

School A and B's organizational structures were similar. The administration staff at both schools consisted of a principal and two assistant principals who were also designated as instructional consultants for the campus. Approximately fifty professional positions existed which encompassed teachers, counselors, librarian, and a nurse. Numerous paraprofessional positions existed including that of a community liaison. The makeup of the site-based decision making committees for Schools A and B was similar including the following positions: administrators, teachers (of which at least one per grade level was represented), paraprofessionals, parents, and community representation.

School B had embraced and implemented Levin's Accelerated Schools model. Additionally, School B had also implemented several multi-age classrooms in the 1995-1996 school year which included prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade.

Teachers, parents and administrators all worked together to promote parental involvement at School A. Parents were described as being primarily involved as volunteers and observers in the audience through organized activities, classroom visits, and contact with school personnel such as teachers and the community liaison.

Organized activities included Meet the Teacher Night, Report Card Night, Grandparents Day, classes on parenting, nutrition, sewing, and flower arranging, computer tutorials involving parents, and schoolwide fairs where student work is displayed. Contact with parents was described as occurring through phone calls, home visits, and written correspondence in the form of memos, newsletters, and notices. Written communication was in both English and Spanish.

The community liaison (paraprofessional position) was the person on campus charged with the responsibility of encouraging parents to become more involved in school. Her duties included making visits to the homes of those students with excessive absences, providing transportation so parents could attend school activities, and phoning parents to encourage involvement as well as--arranging and coordinating parental meetings and activities.

Visions for the parental involvement program from the principal, teachers and parents focused on increasing the number of parent volunteers on campus and parental visits to the classroom. A need for increased parental access to the principal was also identified.

The assistant principal stated the concern that the school was in need of creating a more welcoming environment for parents to ease the parents' fear and intimidation based on their lack of knowledge, education, and language. In contrast most teachers described themselves as providing a comfortable welcoming environment for parents as well as being keenly aware of the parents' preference for comfortable activities such as running off papers as opposed to working directly with students.

Student success was a top priority for School B. Already, School B had been the recipient of many state and national awards such as the National Blue Ribbon Schools and Drug-Free Schools Recognition Awards, and a $90,000 award from the state for outstanding test scores. All decisions were centered around the question of what is best for our students.

Success at School B was based on mutual respect between parents and the school. Principal B attributed the school's success to the support of its parents. In return, parents spoke

highly of the principal and her staff and its success rate with children. Parents were ready to support the school in whatever capacity was needed and found a variety of parental involvement roles available.

Principal B shared her realization that parental involvement was not about numbers; it was about parents understanding the school's goal of helping children to succeed. Thus, many activities and opportunities were provided through which parents could become involved in their child's education. Activities described by participants included monthly parental meetings, Family Math Sessions, Library Night, Jicama fall festival, Saturday computer tutorials, science fair, Report Card Night, Meet the Teacher Night, student-led conferences at the end of each six-week marking period, and awards assemblies.

Parental contact was described as occurring through phone calls, home visits, and written communication in the form of a monthly calendar, bimonthly principal letters, progress reports at the end of three weeks, and Good News cards (positive notes home about good behavior). Participants also described parental contact occurring through invitations from the principal to attend special meetings such as the Blue Ribbon Schools Site Visitor meeting, teachers writing personal thank you notes to parents for helping their children with homework and projects, and being notified of a personal meeting with the principal regarding their child's academic progress and special efforts needed by the home to bring the child up to grade level.

School B's warm and welcoming climate was described as strengthening parental involvement and lessening the fear and intimidation that many parents might feel because of their limited level of education and lack of knowledge of the English language. All faculty members at School B labored to overcome any obstacles that parents might face.

Cross-analysis of data from two elementary schools revealed commonalities as well as differences in parental involvement within the context of site-based decision making.

Parental perceptions of their involvement role within the context of SBDM

Parents at both School A and School B varied in their perceptions as to what the parental involvement role should be within the context of SBDM. (See Table 1 in the appendix.) Parents shared the commonality of identifying the roles of parent as co-decisionmaker and parent in a supportive function as listener, advisor, representative, and/or observer.

Differences arose when parents at both sites identified additional perceptions regarding parental involvement roles not held by parents at the other sites. Parents at School A identified two roles not found at School B. One was the role of parents overriding school decisions, and the other was a "lost/limited" role. School B identified a role not found at School A, that of parents who viewed school faculty as experts in education and placed complete trust in the decisions made by the faculty. These differences appear because of the culture of the school and how the school handled all aspects of parental involvement.

Parents at School A had difficulty in ascribing a role for themselves in SBDM. The culture of the school was such that the principal did not make parental involvement a priority, and she did not work to create a climate that welcomed parents. Much of the responsibility for promoting parental involvement and communication with parents was delegated to the community liaison. It is within the context of this culture that parents had a hard time ascribing a role for themselves within SBDM. Those parents with the lowest level of education and English fluency were reluctant to assign themselves a role and perceived their involvement role in the most limited sense. Parents were unclear as to the scope and authority of their role in SBDM and the school in general.

Parents at School B were much more secure in describing a role for themselves within SBDM. This was because of a feeling of mutual respect existed between the faculty and teachers, together with complete trust and confidence in the decisions made by the school. Principal B had created a vision for parental involvement in which every parent would be active in his or her

child's education. Also, the principal had led the faculty in creating a climate that welcomed all parents and made them feel as if they had something important to contribute to their children's education. Additionally, the Campus Improvement Plan contained a major section devoted to how the school would implement and develop practices for promoting parental support and involvement. Thus, within this context, parents were able to ascribe a role to themselves in SBDM. Even those parents with low levels of education and language fluency felt comfortable at School B, and they could designate an involvement role within SBDM for themselves.

Thus, the ease with which parents could attribute a role to themselves within the context of SBDM seemed directly related to the school's ability to provide clarity or a focus for the parents' role in the school overall.

Teacher perceptions of parental involvement role within the context of SBDM

The variety of perceptions held by teachers at School A and School B in regards to the involvement role for parents within the context of SBDM are depicted in Table 1. Teachers at both schools shared the commonality of identifying the role of parents as co-decisionmakers.

Teachers at School A identified two additional roles for parents. Those roles included decisionmaker in a limited capacity (especially in the area of curricula); an observer who, at times, would answer specific questions related to the children's homelife; and parents would serve on a committee apart from the Campus Council. In addition to the role of co-decisionmaker, teachers at School B identified the parental involvement role as a representative and/or as a representative/advisor.

Teachers at School A had identified a wide range of perceptions for the parental involvement role within SBDM. Perceptions ranged from equal partners to no role at all. Teacher perceptions at School A indicated that not all of them were comfortable with the full participation of parents in SBDM. Also the teachers' attitudes were consistent with the literature,

which indicates educators are not enthusiastic about parental participation in curricula development, instruction, or school governance (Williams and Stallworth, 1983-1984).

The representative/advisor role identified by teachers at School B was considered to have the potential to impact on the decisions made by the SBDM committee. Additionally, teachers perceived parental input as invaluable. Therefore, there was no apparent striking differences between those teachers who perceived the role of the parent to be that of co-decisionmaker and those who viewed the role to be that of a representative/advisor. Moreover, School B had a clearly defined role for parents in SBDM within their Campus Improvement Plan--namely, that of providing input on the community's viewpoint on issues being addressed. Thus, congruency existed between the teachers' perceptions and the Campus Improvement Plan.

Principal perceptions of the parental involvement role within the context of SBDM

Table 1 also depicts the variance of perceptions held by administrators at School A and School B in regards to the involvement role for parents within the context of SBDM. Administrators at neither school attributed a co-decision making role to parents.

Administrators in School A differed in their perceptions of the role of parents within SBDM. The two administrators each identified a different parental involvement role within SBDM. The principal perceived the role to be that of a listener and volunteer (to assist carrying out certain activities for the SBDM committee). The assistant principal perceived the role to be that of an advisor--that is, speaking out on the needs of that particular community. The principal's perceived role was similar to the one held by those teachers who had selected an observer/resource role for parents and who had reflected the belief that parent participation in shared governance and matters related to curricula and instruction was undesirable. The assistant principal's views were more closely aligned with those views held by teachers who ascribed to parents the role of co-decisionmaker.

Administrators at School B were strongly unified in their perception of parents serving in the role of parent representative/ advisor. School B administration described the role as voicing opinions and concerns--as well as asking questions. The perception of administrators at School B was aligned with the identified role for parents within SBDM in the Campus Improvement Plan. It was also aligned with the views of their teachers.

Thus, School B had an overall unified philosophy amongst faculty members as to the role of parental involvement within the context of SBDM. A unified philosophy did not exist between administrators or among the parents, teachers, and administrators at School A.

The extent of differences in Parental involvement roles for minorities

There were great variations in the identification of differences in involvement roles for minority parents. At both Schools A and B, Hispanic parents made up almost 100 percent of the parent population. Therefore, participants did not identify ethnicity as creating differences in parental involvement roles. Rather socioeconomic status, level of education, fluency of the English language, and immigrant status were identified as having an effect on parental involvement roles.

School A participants readily indicated that differences in language fluency, level of education, socioeconomic status, and immigrant status affected the parental involvement roles on campus. These factors were identified as barriers that restricted parents to a volunteer role in the school. Thus, parents at School A did not have a wide variety of parental involvement roles available to them and were primarily restricted to passive roles of volunteer or member of the audience.

School B had a much different attitude. The faculty members stressed that parental involvement was not being affected by background differences and that all parents were treated the same--no matter what their background. School B stressed that the common thread that ran among parents at School B was that they cared about their children's education. Additionally,

teachers at School B talked about challenges that parents faced as opposed to barriers or obstacles. Even the principal would speak of parents who were poor and who had low levels of literacy as being actively involved in training sessions to help their children. Participants at School B identified the factors of educational levels and English--fluency levels as making it difficult at times for parents to be fully involved in SBDM committee meetings, but they did not identify these factors as creating barriers to being involved in their child's education.

Parents at School B were provided with a wide variety of parental involvement roles because the faculty operated from the philosophy that all parents were to be active in their children's education and could contribute to that education. The faculty perceptions at School B supported the findings of Ritter et al., (1993 in Chavkin) and the findings of Williams and Chavkin (in Chavkin ed.1993) that minority parents (including Hispanics) do care about the education of their children and that they agree strongly about the importance of being involved with their children's education.

Furthermore, the faculty at School B, unlike at School A, did not hold to the traditional beliefs held by many educators that parents do not transmit educational values and do hold to the belief of low expectations regarding the follow-up of parents (Tangri and Leitch, 1982, and Dauber and Epstein Report No.33, 1989). Additionally, the faculty at School B demonstrated that the school was able to successfully involve disadvantaged parents in their children's education. Thus, they supported the literature that indicates that disadvantaged parents can be successfully involved (Clark, 1983; Comer 1980; Epstein, 1990; and Epstein and Dauber, 1991).

The parental involvement role of decionmaker role within the context of SBDM as identified by parents, principals, and teachers.

Participants at Schools A and B both described the SBDM committee as a means through which parents were engaged as decisionmakers on their campuses. However, similarities

and differences existed between the sites as to how parents were actually involved as decisionmakers in SBDM.

The strong similarity between the two campuses is that participants described parents as operating at a co-decision making level and parents as operating in a supportive role as a combination of listener, advisor, and representative. It may appear, given the similarity in the ascribed roles, that both schools involved parents in a similar fashion on their respective SBDM committees; but such was not the case. Parental involvement within the SBDM committees varied greatly between the campuses.

At School A, parents sporadically attended the SBDM committee meetings. This pattern of parental absenteeism limited their input--regardless of the fact that some participants (including the former SBDM parent committee member) had indicated that parents were treated as equals on the committee. Additionally, a concern arose as to whether or not SBDM was being practiced or if the committee served as a rubber stamp for Principal A's decisions. It was apparent that parents were not active in SBDM.

The picture of parental involvement within the context of SBDM was much different at School B. The SBDM committee was identified as being fully empowered by the principal with shared decision making taking place. Two very clear roles for parents surfaced--namely, that of co-decisionmaker and a combination of listener, advisor, and representative. However, it is important to note that these roles were intertwined with one another. The representative and/or advisor role was an active role that involved voicing opinions and concerns, providing vital input to the council, and asking questions. It did not serve a passive function.

Thus, participants at School B described the parental involvement role as one that was actively involved in the decision making process. Malen, Ogawa, and Krantz (1990) recount that most SBDM committee members report serving in the supportive capacity of listening, advising, and endorsing decisions already made--taking token actions. Hence, School B's active parental

involvement role went beyond the strictly supportive function connoted by most SBDM committee members.

The parental involvement role as decisionmaker in matters related to school curricula and instruction

SBDM committees at both schools made decisions in a variety of areas including curricula and instruction. However, both schools identified parents as not being involved in the curricula decisions within the SBDM committees.

At School A, the parental member of the SBDM committee was the only participant to recognize that parents were involved in decisions related to curricula and instruction. Other participants connoted that parents were unfamiliar and detached from curricular decisions. Reasons for not being involved included language barriers, lack of education and a tendency to go along with whatever decision were made by educators.

At School B, participants indicated that the Campus Improvement Plan was the focus of the SBDM committee. While this implied that the SBDM committee was involved in making curricular decisions, participants indicated that SBDM parents were willing to defer schoolwide curricular decisions to the school faculty. School B was operating at a stage which aimed to educate parents about the curricula being offered rather than involving parents in curricula decisions through SBDM.

Therefore, at School B, parents were not considered as active decisionmakers related to curricula and instruction issues. However, given the focus of the SBDM committee on the Campus Improvement Plan parents had exposure to curricula decisions even if they chose to not to take part.

At School A, parents were uninformed regarding curricular matters. Teachers would go on to identify a need for parents to receive training to participate on the SBDM committee. Again, School A held to its traditional beliefs that parents were limited in their ability to assist

with schooling and had no current mechanism in place to raise their knowledge regarding current curricula standards and issues. The belief that parents should not be involved in curricular matters was also reflected.

Factors enhancing or inhibiting the parental involvement role of decisionmaker within the context of SBDM

Several factors emerged as enhancing and or inhibiting parents as decisionmakers in SBDM. Tables 2 and 3 (see appendix) depict the enhancers and inhibitors to the role of parent as decisionmaker within the context of SBDM identified by participants at School A and School B. School A participants spoke within the context of enhancing and/or inhibiting parental involvement overall in the school. They had difficulty in identifying factors that applied specifically to parental involvement within SBDM. School B participants were able to make specific application to SBDM.

Climate was pointed to as a critical factor at both schools that would either inhibit parental involvement in SBDM or enhance it. School A identified climate as an inhibiting factor. Although Principal A and some teachers felt that they offered an open door policy to parents, there were powerful suggestions from parents and the faculty to create a more welcoming climate and for parents to meet more often with the principal. School A's climate was not conducive to collaborative problem solving.

School B's climate was identified as an enhancing factor because of its open and inclusive nature. The participants at School B specifically pointed out the principal's personality and actions of personally greeting parents and serving in the role as translator at SBDM as a distinct factor that encouraged the parents' involvement role as decisionmaker in SBDM.

Training was identified as a potential enhancing factor for parental involvement in SBDM at both schools. Training in the area of leadership was requested by the grandparent/community representative at School B, and general training in the area of school

issues that comes before SBDM was suggested by teachers at School A. Additionally, School B suggested a potential enhancing factor of increasing the number of slots for parents on the SBDM committee.

The identified inhibiting factors from both schools brought forth similarities. Both campuses identified English language fluency, level of education, and transportation as inhibitors to the involvement of parents as decisionmakers within the context of SBDM. School B stressed transportation as an inhibiting factor much more than School A.

Differences arose in the factors that inhibited parental involvement as a decisionmaker in SBDM because School A identified many more inhibitors than School B. The factors of childcare, economic factors, and Mexican-American culture were cited as additional barriers as well as low attendance at SBDM committee meetings and parents' lack of background knowledge and information regarding school affairs.

Examination of the list of inhibitors confirms the findings in literature related to barriers for the involvement of minority parents involvement. Comer (1980) indicated that, because of race, income and educational differences, minority parents are often reluctant to become involved.

School B had attempted to address factors listed as inhibiting with either enhancement factors or potential enhancement strategies/factors to offset them. Some examples include: language translation for low English language fluency and offering leadership training to parents with low levels of education.

Factors as enhancing or inhibiting the parental involvement role of decisionmaker in matters of school curricula and instruction within the context of SBDM

Participants at Schools A and B identified many of the same enhancers and inhibitors for the role of parent as decisionmaker in SBDM in matters of school curricula and instruction as for the role of decisionmaker in SBDM in general. See tables 4 and 5.

Schools A and B both cited the need for more parental training as an enhancing factor for curricula involvement. Parental training at School A was suggested as needing to center around increasing parental knowledge and understanding in curricular areas such as bilingual education, special education, and the state's required academic skills test. Suggested parent training at School B focused on raising the parents' knowledge related to the state's mandated curricula.

Similarities existed between the identified inhibitors. Both schools suggested that lack of English fluency and low levels of education as well as lack of opportunity to be involved in curricular decisions impacted on the involvement of parents as a decisionmaker within the context of SBDM.

School A went on to suggest several inhibiting factors not cited by School B. Those factors were recent parental immigrant status (parents had no knowledge of American schooling) and lack of background knowledge of affairs coming before the SBDM committee. School B cited additional inhibiting factors such as the parental view of educators as the experts (thus complete trust in educators' decisions) and the use of teacher jargon, acronyms, and terminology, which made parents feel uncomfortable.

A strong theme running through the factors that enhance parental involvement in curricula at Schools A and B is the need for more training in school affairs, particularly in curricular areas. Additionally, the training needs to be designed to make parents feel comfortable and not intimidated by specialized educational terminology as well. The training must be delivered in the Spanish and must target all parents--including those who lack self-confidence because of their education level and English language fluency.

Lessons from the Field

This research study on the role of parental involvement within the context of site-based decision making lead to important understandings and lessons.

The perceptions among stakeholders as to the involvement role for parents within the context of SBDM reflect the value administrators and teachers place on parental involvement.

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature which indicates the need for the parental involvement role within SBDM to be clarified. Reyes and Wagstaff (1992) found that parents desire to be involved in decision making, but they are uncertain as to their scope of authority and responsibility in decision making within the context of site-based decision making.

The fact that stakeholders differ in their perceptions of the parental involvement role within the context of SBDM is an indication that a school has not clearly defined its parental involvement role. Furthermore, the perceptions held by school stakeholders are reflective of the value that the school--namely, educators and teachers--places on parental involvement.

School B's stakeholder perceptions reflect the importance the school had afforded to parental involvement. School B had clarified the role for overall parental involvement in the school as well as within the specific context of site-based decision making.

Agreement existed among the perceptions held by administrators, teachers, and parents at School B as to the parental involvement role within site-based decision making--namely, co-decisionmaker and combination of the roles of representative and advisor. These roles were not exclusive of one another and operated in an active manner. Additionally, School B had defined the role for parental involvement within site-based decision making in writing through the Campus Improvement Plan. Parents were expected to present the views of the parents and the community to the site-based decision making committee. This input was regarded as critical for the decisions being made.

Furthermore, School B operated under Henry Levin's Accelerated Schools Model. Chenoweth and Kushman, using Richard F. Elmore's typology of school restructuring, described Levin's Accelerated Schools model with two reform steps--one of which reformed relationships

between schools and their clients and stressed building an inclusive school community that engages parents and community members as partners (Chenoweth and Kushman in Chion-Kenney, 1994). School B promoted such an inclusive community, and it was clear that parents understood what was expected from them in regards to their children's education--that is, to be involved and support the school's goals.

The range of authority and responsibility in decision making within site-based decision making was known to School B's parents and other stakeholders. Parents were engaged as partners in an inclusive community, and their role in site-based decision making was defined through the Campus Improvement Plan and the Accelerated Schools Model. Thus, the perceptions held by stakeholders at School B reflected the importance and value placed on parental involvement by teachers and administrators.

The perceptions held at School A were a direct reflection of the low value attributed to parental involvement. A lack of agreement existed among School A's administrators, teachers, and parents as to the role of parental involvement role within site-based decision making. Perceptions varied not only across the stakeholder groups but also within each group of participants. Parents were confused as to the role they were to assign to themselves in site-based decision making; and in many cases, they had great difficulty in doing so. A continuum of roles existed with parents at one extreme identifying their role as overriding the site-based decision making committee's authority and parents at the other extreme struggling to identify a role for themselves within site-based decision making. Thus, perceptions of the parental involvement role within the context of SBDM held by teachers and administrators conveyed the message that parental involvement was not important nor considered critical to the success of students or an important component of decision making.

The perceptions held by school stakeholders reflect the level of importance placed on parental involvement by the school, namely--administrators and teachers. Parental role

perceptions held by stakeholders' at School A reflected the value that parental involvement was unimportant. The stakeholder's parental role perceptions at School B reflected the high value placed on parental involvement.

Attitudes of principals and teachers toward parents influence the type and availability of parental involvement roles in the school.

Findings at School A are consistent with the literature that indicates that few schools offer the opportunity for minority parents to be involved in non-traditional activities such as advocacy, school decisions, evaluations, or budget (Williams and Chavkin in Chavkin ed. 1993). Furthermore, findings at School A are also consistent with the literature that indicates that the majority of educators (principals and teachers) do not consider parents as having the appropriate training to serve in a decision making capacity and prefer that parental involvement be limited to traditional roles such as fund-raiser or classroom helper (Rich 1987; Chavkin and Williams, 1985; Snider 1990; and Williams and Stallworth, 1984).

Parents at School A served in the traditional roles of volunteer and as member of the audience. Faculty members at School A spoke of parental background differences such as level of education, level of English fluency, socioeconomic status, and immigrant status as limiting involvement roles available for parents. The primary expectation for parents at School A remained that of increasing the number of parental volunteers on campus and in attendance at school activities. Furthermore, examples of parental involvement on the campus were described as volunteer activities such as supervising in the cafeteria, sewing, fund-raising, and attending school activities as an audience. The principal defined active involvement within site-based decision making as making the campus look pretty through the addition of curtains and pillows.

The faculty members at School A also expressed the sentiment that parents lacked the training and educational background to be able to make decisions within the context of site-based decision making. For example, because parents were recent immigrants from Mexico and were

not educated they would be unaware of the components and purpose of American curricula and would be unable to provide any significant input in such matters. Furthermore, perceptions held by teachers and administrators at School A revealed that there was some sentiment towards limiting parental involvement within the context of site-based decision making.

The structure of School B offered parents opportunities for non-traditional involvement roles such as advocate and decisionmaker. Moreover, faculty members had an interest in building the knowledge base and comfort level of parents within site-based decision making so as to increase parental participation.

The faculty members at School B held the belief that parents were interested in their children's education (despite their background), and they were able to transmit the schools' educational values. They believed that parents cared deeply about their children's education and these parents should have a variety of involvement roles available to them--including decision making. School B sought the input of parents through surveys and meetings with the principal and teachers--as well as the Campus Leadership Team. Faculty sentiment indicated that the parental input brought to the Campus Leadership Team was invaluable.

Therefore, School B was non-traditional and did not operate as most schools. They provided parents with a variety of involvement roles and truly embraced parents as partners in education; and as such, the staff at School B was comfortable in extending to them a role as decisionmaker and advocate within site-based decision making.

Traditional school culture discourages the parental involvement role of decisionmaker in SBDM.

The findings at School A are consistent with the literature that indicates most schools operate from a "Protective Model", the aim being to protect themselves from the interference of parents (Swap, 1993). In this model parents delegate to the school the responsibility for educating their children; and parents hold the school accountable for results. Educators, in turn,

accept this assignment of responsibility. Parental involvement in decision making or collaborative problem solving is seen as inappropriate and as an interference in the role of the teacher.

School A fits into this category as a result of its protective stance. This school had demonstrated that it did not actively seek to involve parents in a wide variety of roles at the school. Attitudes of some of the faculty members, including the principal, as discussed earlier, indicated the belief that parents lacked the training and/or education to be involved in educational decisions at School A--including site-based management. Additionally, the attitude had been communicated to a parent--that perhaps--this parent was not welcome at the school. A faculty member had also pointed out the lack of encouragement from the principal towards parents and an over-reliance on the community liaison as the means through which parents communicated with the school. Thus, a negative school culture existed; and it placed a barrier to the effective involvement of disadvantaged parents. Significantly, this culture impacted on the SBDM role for parents.

Participants at School A identified school culture as an inhibiting factor to the parental involvement role as decisionmaker in site-based decision making and to overall parental involvement on campus. School A recognized the importance of school climate, and the need for increasing the parents' overall knowledge of school affairs. However, School A was not yet at the point of involving parents in collaborative problem solving or having parents serve in an active role in site-based decision making where parental involvement was viewed as needed and necessary.

School B operated as a non-traditional school with the Accelerated Schools Model. School B had restructured itself so that its attitude toward parents was one that welcomed parental input, concerns, and questions (including those related to instruction); and it viewed parents as critical to the academic success of its children. Also, School B strived to create an

inclusive community where parents were always welcome and were seen as a positive asset to the school. Furthermore, School B looked at differences in parental background as challenges the school worked to overcome so as not to limit parental involvement roles. As a result, School B's parental involvement role within site-based decision making was an active role leaning toward parents as decisionmakers.

Furthermore, participants identified the climate at School B as enhancing the role of parental involvement as decisionmaker within the context of site-based decision making. The principal was viewed as a leader in setting the tone for parental involvement. She was also identified as enhancing factor for parental involvement as decisionmaker in SBDM through her role as translator at site-based decision making meetings. Most inhibiting factors to the involvement of parents as decisionmaker in site-based decision making, as identified by School B participants, had a corresponding enhancement factor to overcome their limitations.

The findings at Schools A are consistent with the literature which indicates that many schools operate under the "cultural constraints problem," and as a result--SBDM committees are unable to improve teaching and learning (Guskey and Petersen, 1996). Guskey and Petersen assert that site-based decision making requires that traditional school roles be redefined so that teachers and parents can work collaboratively on schoolwide decisions. They maintain that in most schools teachers and parents have not been traditionally involved in critical decisions about budget, personnel and other policy issues. Furthermore, they maintain that teachers and parents may believe it is not their job to make decisions; or, teachers may believe that the classroom is their exclusive domain; and many parents may feel uncomfortable pushing for change. School A operated under "cultural constraints", School B did not.

Thus, School A and School B operated with different cultures; and, as a result, both schools had different roles for parental involvement to play in site-based decision making. A

school that operates as an inclusive community that values parents will welcome parental input in site-based decision making and will move toward the role of the parent as decisionmaker.

Parental involvement within schools is enhanced when principals and teachers possess a knowledge and understanding of the parents' cultural background.

School B's parental involvement practices reflected the fact that they reached out to all families. All families includes those who lack the time, energy, self-confidence or English language proficiency to take part in traditional activities as well as those parents who may be fearful based on past experiences or cultural norms.

Teachers and administrators at School B did not assume as often is the norm that minority parents are lazy, uninterested, or incapable of supporting their children's education. Nor did they believe that low-income and or minority parents had little to offer to the education of their children (Davies, 1991).

School B did not operate from the view that minority parents are deficient and instead emphasized the strength of the family in contributing to students' education. Educators at School B recognized that parents were very interested in their children's education and wanted the best for them. School B was cognizant of the cultural background of its parents and realized that the school must reach out to its parents. Reliance on traditional parental involvement roles would not be sufficient in order to reach out to their parental population.

Comer (1980) points out that minority parents may feel uncomfortable at school and as a result do not participate in traditional activities because they often lack knowledge about school protocol, have had negative experiences with schools and feel unwelcome at middle class institutions. Racial, income, and educational differences also make parents reluctant to become involved in the school. School B recognized the need to overcome parents' reluctance and reach out to them. An effort was made, led by the principal, to make all parents feel welcome. Parents were made to feel that they had something positive to contribute to the school. This was proven

by the fact that school climate was cited as an enhancer to the overall parental involvement program and to the parental involvement role as decisionmaker within SBDM.

School B recognized the high level of trust that parents placed in the school and they were very careful to honor this trust by making educationally sound decisions for children at all times. Parents' high level of trust was reflected in the parents' view of the school faculty as the educational "experts" and complete trust in the educational decisions made by the faculty. Schools not cognizant of parents' cultural background may have interpreted parents' willingness to defer certain educational decisions to the "experts" as a lack of interest in their children's education. Rather, it was a strong show of trust in the school. A special relationship existed between the parents and faculty members at School B.

Evidence of the special relationship between parents and school faculty was reflected when the parents of former students sought out the assistance from School B's principal and teachers when their children ran into problems at the middle school level. Principal B responded to the parents' concerns and worked to ease the transition of elementary students into middle school and lessen parents' fear of the unknown.

School B provided parents with the assistance necessary in order to support their children's schoolwork. This supports the findings of Dauber and Epstein (1989) who found that schools' practices not just family characteristics make a difference in whether parents become involved in and feel informed about their child's education. School B's practices provided parents with the skills to support their children's education rather than making the assumption that parents were incapable due to lack of caring and or low levels of education and English fluency.

School B built on the strength of its parents wanting the best education possible for their children and the fact they were willing to assist the school as needed or requested. Thus, School B demonstrated the importance of knowing and understanding parents' cultural background rather than operating on mistaken assumptions.

The parental involvement role within the context of SBDM related to curricula and instruction matters is not that of a direct decisionmaker.

The findings at Schools A and B related specifically to the area of curricula, support the literature, which indicates that site-based decision making committees do not exert a significant influence on matters related to budget, personnel, programming--least of all curriculum and instruction (Clune and White, 1988; Malen and Ogawa, 1988, and Wohlsetter and Odden, 1992).

Findings at School B further support that literature indicating that many site-based decision making members describe their involvement role to be a supportive function--namely, that of listening, advising, endorsing the decisions that others have already made, and taking token actions (Malen, Ogawa, and Krantz, 1990).

School B had identified the overall parental involvement role in site-based decision making as an active role of representative and co-decisionmaker. The Campus Leadership Team had identified itself as focusing on the school's Campus Improvement Plan, which included matters of curricula and instruction. However, parents were not directly active in matters related to curricula and instruction. Team members indicated this area as one of discomfort, and as one where parents were willing to defer to the "experts." School B did work to educate parents on school happenings and to increase parents' knowledge related to their children's academic performance--as well as help provide parents with the needed skills and strategies to assist their children.

Participants at School B identified a number of inhibiting and enhancing factors related to the parental involvement role as decisionmaker in matters related to school curricula and instruction. Parents were in need of more training on state mandates, and faculty members needed to refrain from using technical language.

School A also supported the literature regarding the lack of parental involvement as a decisionmaker related to matters of curricula and instruction within site-based decision making.

Parents at School A were limited in their involvement in site-based decision making across all decision making areas, including curricula and instruction. Participants at School A specified factors that inhibited parental involvement within SBDM in those matters related to school curriculum and instruction. Parents were repressed in their involvement because of their lack of general knowledge regarding to school affairs. This feeling of repression supports the literature, which indicated that parents often were not kept adequately informed by the school about school activities and operations (Malen and Ogawa, 1988).

Thus, the findings at Schools A and B support the literature purporting that parents are not involved as decisionmakers within the context of site-based decision making matters--particularly in those matters related to school curricula and instruction. The suggestion that parents need training related to overall school affairs and curricula is evident if parents are ever to achieve a decision making role that moves beyond their current role as serving in a supportive function in school curricula and instruction.

Conclusions

The review of the parental involvement role in a majority/minority context within site-based decision making, leads to implications. These implications apply to campus level personnel that work with parents and families, and who share responsibilities with families for the learning and development of their children. These are especially applicable to campuses that are largely comprised of minority students and parents.

(1) School faculties must examine their own beliefs and attitudes toward parents. Principals and teachers that do not recognize the need to redefine the traditional roles of stakeholders--especially that of parents--will not succeed in the implementation of site-based decision making.

(2) A change in school culture that moves away from a "protective model" and work to overcome "the cultural constraints problem" is necessary. All school personnel must work to

establish a collaborative school culture. Staff development must be directed towards changing traditional roles of parents and teachers to non-traditional roles which embrace all stakeholders as part of the shared decision making process.

(3) Principals must work to establish a school climate that makes all parents feel welcome and as if they have something positive to contribute. As demonstrated in this study, all types of contact with parents are critical including the first moment that parents enter the school. No opportunity to build a positive rapport with parents must be overlooked.

(4) Schools must be places where principals must work to provide a wide variety of parental involvement roles for parents on campus beyond traditional roles. For example, School B identified specific strategies to involve parents in their children's education and keep them informed and up-to-date on their children's academic progress.

(5) Schools must clearly state the parental role and expectation for parental involvement in SBDM. The scope of authority and responsibility in decision making must be defined.

Given the focus of this study, future research could be replicated in several areas. The study could be expanded beyond elementary schools to include middle schools and high schools to analyze the commonalities and differences in parental involvement in site-based decision making at all three levels. Additionally, this study could be replicated in schools that are considered to be of high socioeconomic status and to have significant numbers of Hispanic students. The findings could be compared and contrasted with the present study. Furthermore, given the predominant Hispanic population of the sites, this study could be replicated with schools of mixed ethnicity or the predominance of another ethnic group such as African American. The findings could be compared and contrasted with the current study to see the impact of ethnicity on parental involvement roles.

Furthermore, studies could be undertaken to describe how school councils should be composed in order to maximize parental contributions. Such studies could identify how power is

best distributed among administrators, teachers and parents on site-based decision making councils or committees.

Finally, it is recommended that parental involvement and its relation to student success/achievement be studied. High performing schools could be selected as the focus of such a study. The level of parental involvement in the school and the role of parents within SBDM could then be studied so as to determine if parental involvement has a direct impact on student achievement and success.

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Appendixes

School Profiles

School A	School B
92% Hispanic	97% Hispanic
100% At Risk	92% At Risk
50% ESL Classes	80% ESL Classes
1.6% recent immigrants	12% recent immigrants
12% Migrant	40% Migrant
Acceptable Accountability Rating	Exemplary Accountability Rating

An accountability rating of "acceptable" means that at least 25 percent of all students and students in each student group had passed each subject areas of the state's academic skills test. Likewise, the campus must have had a dropout rate of 6 percent or less and an attendance rate of at least 94 percent.

An accountability rating of "exemplary" means that at least 90 percent of all students and students in each student group had passed each subject areas of the state's academic skills test. Likewise, the campus must have had a dropout rate of 1 percent or less and an attendance rate of at least 94 percent.

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Participants' Perceptions of the Parental Involvement Role

School A

Parents	Teachers	Principal
*Co-decisionmaker *"Overrider of SBDM Committee *Listener/Observer *Lost/Limited	*Co-decisionmaker *Limited Decisionmaker *Observer	*Advisor *Listener/ Volunteer

School B

Parents	Teachers	Principal
*Co-decisionmaker *Advisor *Listener/Observer	*Co-decisionmaker *Representative/ Advisor	*Representative/ Advisor

Factors Identified by Participants as Enhancing and or Inhibiting the Parent Involvement Role as Decisionmaker in General

School A

Enhancing Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Potential Enhancing Factors
*None Identified	*Current school climate *Level of parent education *English language fluency *Transportation *Child Care *Sporadic parental attendance at SBDM meeting *Economic factors *Mexican American Culture *Lack of knowledge re: school affairs	*Train parents on school issues before the SBDM committee

School B

Enhancing Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Potential Enhancing Factors
*Open school culture *Principal's actions in making parents feel welcome *Translation efforts at SBDM committee	*English language fluency *Level of parent education *Transportation	*Offer leadership training for parents *Increase the number of slots for parent members on SBDM committee

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Factors Identified by Participants as Enhancing and or Inhibiting the Parent Involvement Role as Decisionmaker in matters related to School Curricula and or Instruction

School A

Enhancing Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Potential Enhancing Factors
*None Identified	*Level of parent education *Lack of opportunity to make curricular decisions *English language fluency *Transportation *Immigrant Status *Lack of knowledge re: school affairs *Curricular decisions already made by school faculty	*Parent training in areas of: bilingual education special education academic skills testing

School B

Enhancing Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Potential Enhancing Factors
*Open school culture *Principal's actions in making parents feel welcome *Translation efforts at SBDM committee	*English language fluency *Level of parent education *Teacher jargon/terminology creates parental discomfort *Lack of opportunity to make curricular decisions	*Parent training in state mandates re:curricula

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